

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Television Special To Chronicle Buffalo Soldiers



The Buffalo Soldiers series presents a little-known tale of human bravery and profound courage in America's old West.

They led the charge to settle the western frontiers. They led the charge up San Juan Hill.

Now, Buffalo Soldiers, the unsung black soldiers of the Old West, are leading the charge again. This time, they're on the front lines of the movement to remind America of the African-American settlers, soldiers, scouts, cowboys and western heroes whom history and Hollywood forgot.

National recognition of America's forgotten black western heritage will get a major boost when The Discovery Channel airs "Buffalo Soldiers," a one-hour documentary on the heritage of the Buffalo Soldiers on Nov. 18, from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. The "Buffalo Soldier's" show is part of The Discovery Channel's "Rediscovering America" series with David Hartman.

In 1992, when Gen. Colin Powell unveiled the heroic, 16-foot tall "Buffalo Soldier" monument at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. the first statue ever dedicated to any black westerner, he said "...the Buffalo Soldiers valuable service to their country cannot fail, sooner or later, to meet with due recognition and reward."

General Powell's words at the dedication of the "Buffalo Soldier" monument, helped to reinforce a significant mood change growing among African-Americans. The emerging visibility of America's black western heroes, after a century of being forgotten, is inspiring many African-Americans, for the first time in a generation, to see their American

heritage as a source of pride.

This shift was demonstrated in a recent survey by the Educational Division of the National Geographic Society which found that the black cowboy, is, now, one of the top three issues of interest in the nation's classrooms.

The Discovery Channel's "Buffalo Soldiers," documentary meshes archival stills with current location shots, interviews and historical re-

enactments to trace the inspiring story of the hardships these black soldiers faced in protecting an often ungrateful white settler population.

The Buffalo Soldiers, were the black soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry regiments, stationed on the most isolated outposts of the western frontier during its most turbulent years, after the Civil War. They were named "Buffalo Soldiers" because their

courage, fierce fighting spirit and dark appearance reminded the Plains Indians of their beloved Buffaloes.

The Army gave them the worst living conditions and outdated equipment. Nevertheless, they excelled, with the lowest desertion rate, the least discipline problems and the highest rate of decorations. Between 1867 to 1898, the Buffalo Soldiers received 24 Congressional Medals of Honor, the nation's highest military award.



The Buffalo Soldiers television special will tell the story of 10,000 newly freed African American slaves who formed an integral part of the nation's fighting forces during the Indian Wars between 1866 and 1891. The series will air on The Discovery Channel on Nov. 18 and repeat on Nov. 19 and Nov. 23.

Teen Wins Movie Part

LaToya Chisholm's experience during the summer of 1993 was beyond her wildest dreams. At 12 years old, with no previous acting experience, the outgoing Georgia youngster was cast for a supporting role in The War, Universal Picture's comedy/drama starring Elijah Wood and Academy Award-winner Kevin Costner.

It all began with LaToya's mother heard an announcement on a Macon radio station about an open casting call at the local mall. She immediately thought her outgoing daughter would be perfect. She had been singing solos in her church choir since she was five years old, and she had just done an outstanding job as Coretta Scott King in a Black History Month play at school.

When they went to the open call, hundreds of other parents were there, who felt the same way about their children. LaToya read for the role of Elvadine, a spunky young teen who could sing and dance. The casting director, Debbie Zane, recognized a special spark during LaToya's preliminary reading. Her instincts about LaToya were confirmed further after she heard her energetic rendition of Love's Like An Itchin' In My Heart. After a nationwide search, she was



LaToya Chisholm

beginning to feel LaToya just might be the person she was looking for.

This was just the beginning for LaToya, who went through four more auditions. Each tryout was more demanding than the last with more lines, more singing and dancing. She was told she had the part following a

screen test in wardrobe with two other girls who were to play her best friends in the movie, Lexi Randall from Houston, Texas and Charles Julius from Montgomery, Ala.

"When they finally told me I had the role, I freaked out. I really wanted the part and I worked hard for it. I was very excited to do the film with director Jon Avnet, who made one of my favorite movies, Fried Green Tomatoes," LaToya said.

In The War, Avnet returns to the rural South he vividly captured in Fried Green Tomatoes for a fond, funny and moving tale set in 1970, starring young Elijah Wood as Stu, with newcomer Lexi Randall as his sister Lidia. Kevin Costner plays a supporting roles as their father, a recently returned Vietnam veteran seeking to build a better life for his family. Mare Winningham portrays their mother.

LaToya was among 11 children cast for major roles. Avnet allowed six months for the talent search.

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